PANEL REVIEWER HANDBOOK

National Leadership Grants for Museum

OFFICE OF MUSEUM SERVICES
FISCAL YEAR 2020

WELCOME!

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a peer reviewer for this year's National Leadership Grants for Museums program. We hope you will find this a rewarding experience and will draw satisfaction identifying projects that will help the museum field create engaging learning environments, address the needs of their communities, and serve as trusted stewards of the collections they hold in trust for the public. We assure you that your contribution of time and expertise will be invaluable to IMLS and to the applicants who will receive your comments.

In this handbook, you will find the information you need to carry out your review, including information about the program, step-by-step instructions for using eGMS Reach, and four appendices with important reference material.

If you have any questions about this material or the processes described, please do not hesitate to contact your panel chair at any time.

Once again, thank you for the service you are about to render to museums and communities throughout the nation.

IMLS Office of Museum Services Staff

PANEL REVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS
NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR MUSEUMS PROGRAM

Overview

National Leadership Grant for Museums (NLG-M) supports projects that address critical needs of the museum field and that have the potential to advance practice in the profession so that museums can improve services for the American public.

Distinguishing features of successful NLG-M projects are:
- *Broad Impact:* Projects should show the potential for far-reaching impact beyond the applicant institution and influence practice across one or more disciplines or specific fields within the museum profession.
- *In-depth Knowledge:* Proposals should reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter and an awareness and support of current strategic initiatives and agendas in the field.
- *Innovative Approach:* Projects should employ novel approaches or techniques new to the project area to strengthen and improve museum services to benefit the audiences and communities being served.
- *Collaborative Process:* Projects should incorporate audience, stakeholders and/or other partners to demonstrate broad need, field-wide buy-in and input, access to appropriate expertise, and sharing of resources.
- *Shared Results:* Projects should generate results such as models, new tools, research findings, services, practices, and/or alliances that can be widely used, adapted, scaled, or replicated to extend and leverage the benefits of federal investment.

National Leadership Grants for Museums Project Categories

There are five project categories within the NLG-M grant program:

Collections Care and Public Access
Support the museum field in addressing state-of-the-art collections care and collections information management, curation, preventive conservation, conservation treatments, as well as broad access to and use of museum collections.

Projects may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:
- New tools or services that enhance collection digitization strategies, facilitate access, and aide in the use of museum collections;
- Research focusing on any broadly relevant aspect of the management, conservation, preservation, use of and/or digital access to collections;
- Coalitions and networks to enhance collections care and digital access across the spectrum of institutional sizes, discipline, mission, and locations; and
- New avenues for gathering and incorporating collections information from stakeholders.

Data, Analysis, and Assessment
Support the collection of data that can be analyzed to lead to new understandings about the museum field and its impacts on individuals, communities, and society, and that can

demonstrate trends, identify gaps and opportunities, contribute to improved practices, and help understand the landscape for museums programs and services.

Projects may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:
- Partner with communities to identify and develop solutions to challenges and opportunities through analysis, modeling, and visualization;
- Test methods for assessing needs and evaluating impacts that can be scaled and replicated;
- Use gap analysis and needs assessment to understand the capacity of the museum sector and inform tools to advance the field;
- Conduct longitudinal studies on museum professional preparation to benefit the sector; and
- Partner with higher education to better understand museum practice through data, analysis, and assessment.

Digital Platforms and Applications
Support the exploration, understanding, and use of digital technology in museums to further lifelong learning, community collaboration, and public access to collections.

Projects may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:
- Shared systems, networks, and technologies to enhance access, optimize use, and manage digital assets;
- Tools and technologies that enable people of all backgrounds and abilities to use museum collections and resources;
- Digital media tools for online access to learning resources;
- New media communications tools that foster engagement, learning, and conversation;
- Experiments and tools focusing on educational trends such as open education resources, blended and flipped classrooms, gaming, etc.; and
- Expanded access to and use of collections through technologies such as 3D visualization, augmented and virtual reality, digital archiving, or crowd-sourcing models.

Diversity and Inclusion
Support museums in engaging with communities and providing inclusive services to people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds and to individuals with disabilities. Understand the current status and future trends in the demographics of communities and structure programs and services accordingly. Help museums work with community members and community-based organizations to broaden opportunity and access.

Projects may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:
- User-centered programs that focus on learning for families and individuals from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds;
- Policies and partnerships that address barriers to accessing museum services;
- Programs that raise early awareness about museum careers;
- Models and templates that incorporate diversity and inclusion objectives into institutional strategic plans, interpretive plans and/or collections plans;
- Investigating questions relating to diversity and inclusion, the findings from which will inform museums' work in this area; and

- Resources that promote museums as trusted spaces for civic discourse and dialogue
- Community-based asset identification, stakeholder mapping, and other tools to further work with partners on mutual goals.

Professional Development

Support the recruitment, training, and development of museum staff, volunteers, and interns to grow a skilled, professional, diverse, and inclusive workforce and strengthen museums' capacity to serve their audiences. Share and adopt best practices and innovations by creating programs to ensure the highest standards in all aspects of museum practice.

Projects may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:
- Multi-institution and cross-sector networks and coalitions in support of professional development opportunities;
- Dissemination of content and skills-based information through online communities of practice and other digital platforms;
- Opportunities to encourage a more inclusive and diverse museum professional and volunteer workforce;
- Professional development in relevant sector needs such as digital technology, evaluation, collective impact methods, and collections stewardship;
- Innovative courses, internships, and museum placement plans for emerging professionals; and
- Models and frameworks to support catalytic work in communities.

Funding Levels

There are three funding levels available:

Non-research grant, $50,000–$1,000,000 with 1:1 cost share required

Projects of one to three years that address critical needs of the museum field and that have the potential to advance practice in the profession so that museums can improve services for the American public.

Research grant, $50,000–$1,000,000 with no cost share required

Research projects of one to three years that investigate key questions important to museum practice and that have the potential to advance the profession so that museums can improve services for the American public. See page 6 for more about the elements of an effective research application.

Rapid prototyping grant, $5,000–$50,000 with no cost share required

Projects of one year that prototype and evaluate specific innovations in the ways museums operate and the services they provide. Project results, both successful and unsuccessful, should offer valuable information to the museum field and the potential for improvement in the ways museums serve their communities.
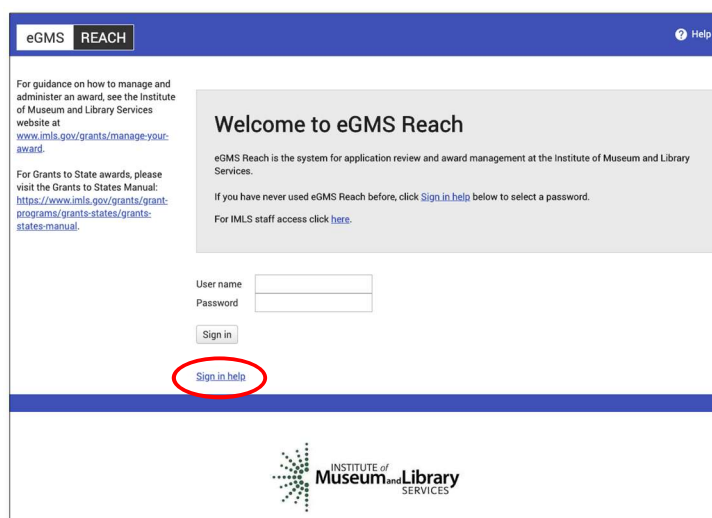
Confidentiality

The information contained in grant applications is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions' project activities, or any other information contained in the applications.

Using eGMS Reach: Step-by-Step Instructions

1. *Sign in to eGMS Reach and create a password.*
   An account has been established for you in eGMS Reach. In a separate email with the subject line "eGMS Reach Account Information," you will receive your access credentials, including a username. If you do not receive such an email, please check your junk folder. If you still do not see the email, contact imls-museumreviewers@imls.gov.

   Once you have the email, please visit https://grants.imls.gov/Reach/ and follow the instructions to create a password. If you are entering the system for the first time, click the **Sign in help** button to create a password. If you are a previous IMLS grantee or reviewer, you may already have an eGMS Reach account and username. If you need to reset your password, you will have the option to do so on the sign in page by clicking the **Sign in help** button.
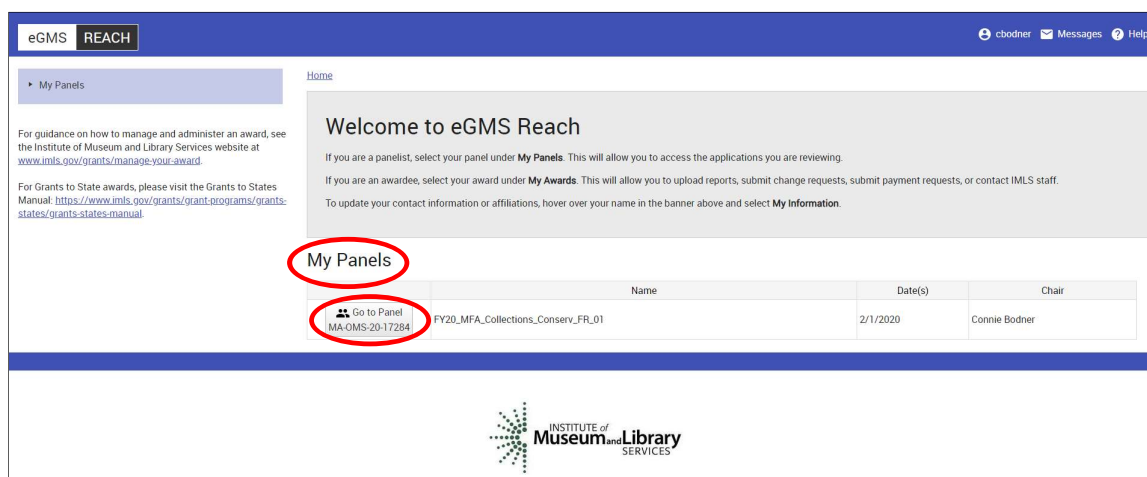
2. *Verify access and confirm you have no conflicts of interest.*
   Once you have signed in successfully, go to **My Panels** and click on the **Go to Panel** button to see Panel Files and Applications assigned to you and to confirm you have no conflicts of interest.

Panel Files include:

- Panel Reviewer Instructions: National Leadership Grants for Museums (this document)
- PDFs containing 2-3 field reviews for each application
- FY2020 Notice of Funding Opportunity (guidelines for applicants)
- Field Review Notes Template – National Leadership Grants for Museums

IMPORTANT: Before proceeding to the Applications Tab, you must affirm that you have reviewed and approved the conflict of interest statement located under your Personal Files and as Appendix C in this document. Click on the paper icon to review Complying with Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest. Then click on the pen icon to affirm that you have reviewed this file and approved its contents.

To electronically sign the file, check the box and click **Save Changes**.

Once you begin reading your assigned applications, you may identify a potential conflict of interest that was not obvious earlier. **Contact your panel chair immediately, and we will help resolve it.**

To see the applications that you will be reviewing, click on the Applications Tab. The paper icons in the **Actions** column allow you to view the applications, and the pen icons allow you to enter your comments and scores for each application. You may also download the applications if you wish by clicking **Download Applications**.

3. Read the applications.

We recommend that you begin by reviewing the [National Leadership Grants for Museums FY2020 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) to which applicants have responded in creating their applications. This document is also available in your Panel Files. Then read the applications, keeping in mind the review Panel Review Criteria available in Appendix D. You will not need to reference each bullet point in your comments, but these questions should guide your thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of each application.

Note that you may come across well thought out and sound projects that do not meet the goals of NLG-M, or projects submitted under the research funding level that do not respond to the Guidance for Research Projects (available in Appendix E). Please address any mismatch between proposed projects and grant program goals, or lack of understanding of what constitutes a research project under NLG-M in your comments and scores.

4. Draft your comments.

For each application you review, we ask you to write a constructive and substantive comment for each panel review criteria: **Goals, Implementation,** and **Results**. All three criteria have equal weight and are equally important in identifying the overall strengths and weaknesses of an application.

You may wish to prepare your comments in a separate document for later copying and pasting into the eGMS Reach evaluation form. A document named "Panel Review Notes Template – National Leadership Grants for Museums" is provided in Panel Files for your convenience. Using it is not required, nor will you upload it to eGMS Reach.

When drafting your comments …
- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Judge the application on its own merits, and do not base your evaluation on any prior knowledge of an institution.
- Make sure your comments justify the scores you provide. A highly complementary comment does not remove the sting of a low score, and a negative comment does not even out a high one. Comments and scores must complement each other and make sense as a whole.

Effective comments...	Poor comments...
- are presented in a constructive manner. - are both substantive and easy to read and understand. - reflect the resources of the institution. - are specific to the individual application. - reflect the numeric score assigned. - highlight the application's strengths and identify areas for improvement. - are directed to applicants—not IMLS or panel reviewers—for their use.	- simply summarize or paraphrase the applicant's own words. - make derogatory remarks. - penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money. - offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information. - make vague or overly general statements. - question an applicant's honesty or integrity.

Below are some examples of **effective** panel reviewer comments:

Goals	
"You clearly identify a critical need within the museum field and propose an innovative solution. The project partners, particularly the State Education Officers, add needed expertise and have been involved in the development of the project. Your intended results are well reasoned, well formulated, achievable, and will provide the field with valuable information. The proposed project is an excellent fit for the NLG-Museums program, Digital Assets and Capacity category."	*Comment is substantive, addresses the review criteria, and employs a positive tone.*
"You make a strong case for the museum to partner with the University to provide research expertise and the results clearly meet the needs of your target audience. However, I believe that the problem you identify is one based in your community rather than in the museum field and does not meet the NLG-Museum program goals of demonstrating broad impact or using an innovative approach. This project more closely matches the goals of the Museums for America grant program and you may want to consider submitting an application to the MFA program in a future year."	*Comment correlates with the score of 1 and makes implementable suggestions for securing funding.*

Implementation	
"Your work plan is clear and outlines specific activities necessary for achieving your goals. I like the series of low-cost experiments intended to provide a direction for more fleshed out versions of those that prove successful. "You might consider adding a few iterations of each experiment to explore its potential for greater success rather than relying on the results from initial attempts."	*Comment provides a constructive assessment of the application and suggestions likely to benefit the applicant.*
Results	
"Your evaluation plan is very thorough and well thought out. The online platform with results from these experiments, resources for duplication, and suggestions for scaling up will be extremely useful. I would have liked to see more robust plans for continuing the dissemination of your work beyond posting the results and resources on the website."	*Comment addresses questions from the review criteria.*

In contrast, below are some examples of **poor** field reviewer comments:

Goal	
"The museum plans to organize a series of experimental interactive education programs on the topic of income equity and evaluate them to determine which prove most successful in meeting their desired learning outcomes for their high school participants. They will share the results on a project website."	*Comment paraphrases the applicant's own words.*
Implementation	
"The work plan would be improved by putting in more time onsite."	*Comment is very brief and has little value to the applicant.*
Results	
"The design of this research study is wrong-headed and will not yield any useful data. The staff is woefully unprepared and will fail in the execution of this project. Targeting federal funds to this museum is a mistake."	*Comment is derogatory and does not provide useful feedback.*
"Strong results with very sustainable benefits."	*Comment is very brief and has little worth or value to the applicant.*

The chart below summarizes some frequently asked questions from NLG-M field reviewers:

Should I consider …?	Yes	No
Whether a project meets the high priority need in the museum field	X	
An institution's financial or staffing needs		X
Whether the project is well planned and the organization has the appropriate resources to complete the project	X	

Whether the applicant has included the information necessary for an adequate evaluation of its merits	X	
Whether a project is new or a resubmission		X
The size or age of the organization		X
An institution's indirect cost rate		X

5. *Assign your scores.*
   Assign a single preliminary score to each application. Use a scale of 1 to 5, as described below.

SCORE DEFINITIONS	
5 – Excellent	The applicant's response is outstanding and provides exceptional support for the proposed project.
4 – Very Good	The applicant's response provides solid support for the proposed project.
3 – Good	The applicant's response is adequate but could be strengthened in its support for the proposed project.
2 –Some Merit	The applicant's response is flawed and does not adequately support the proposed project.
1 – Inadequate/Insufficient	The applicant's response is inadequate or provides insufficient information to allow for a confident evaluation.

6. *Review your work.*
   Review your draft comments and preliminary scores. Adjust your scores, if necessary, to reflect your written evaluation more accurately. Scores should support comments, and comments should justify scores.

7. *Enter your scores and comments.*
   When you are ready to enter your scores and comments, visit https://grants.imls.gov/Reach/ and sign in with the username IMLS assigned you and the password you created. Click on the **Go to Panel** button, and then click on the Applications Tab. Choose an application and click on the pen icon to open the evaluation form.
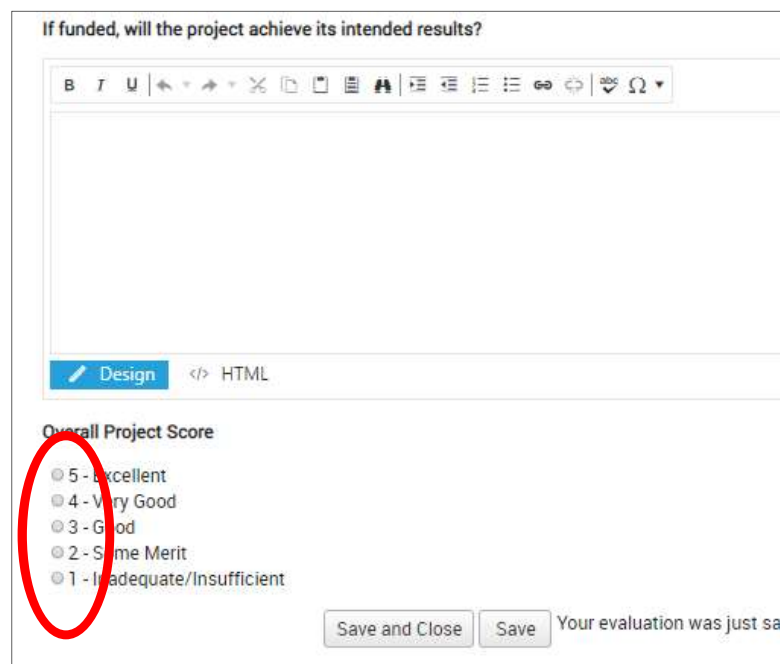
   You may enter your comments directly into the form or copy and paste them from a document you may have created.

   If you copy and paste your comments from another document, make sure to use plain text to avoid including any formatting code. Click on the Paste Plain Text icon (circled below) to create a Paste Plain Text box. Enter your comments, and then click **Paste.**
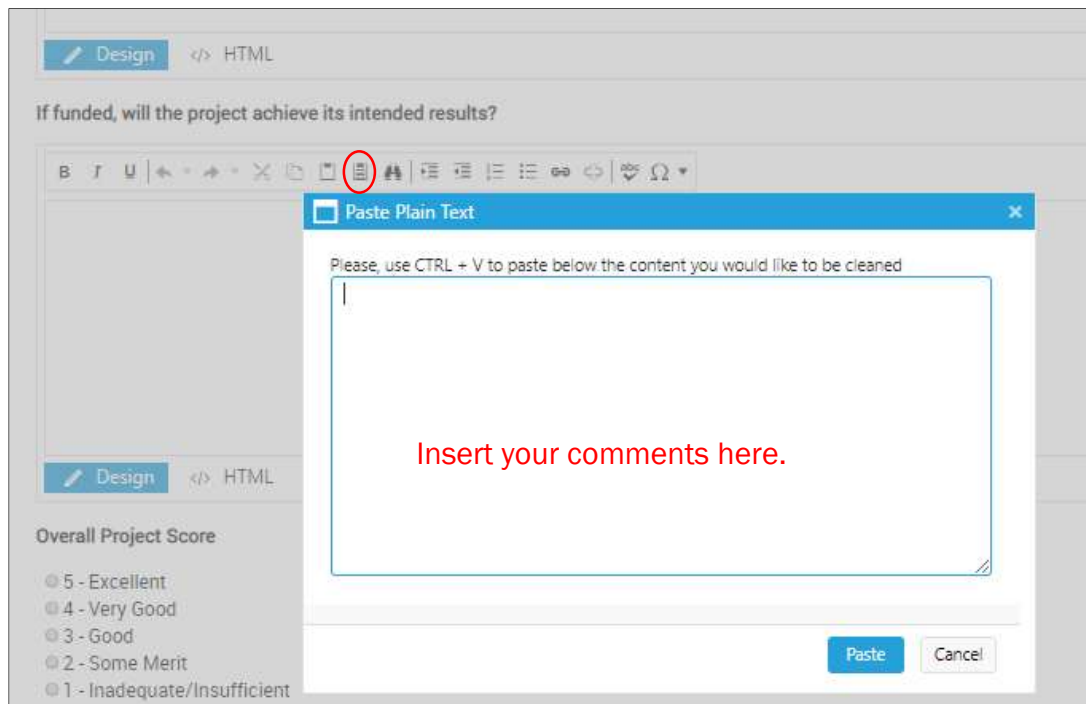
Warning: Only open on instance of an evaluation screen at once. If you have two instances of a of an evaluation screen open on your computer and one of them is blank, the auto-save feature will overwrite any comments you have with the blank comment box.

Choose a score for the overall project from the radio buttons below the Results comment box.

You may return to the evaluation form as frequently as you wish. You can keep track of your progress by checking the "Last Evaluation Update" column on the Applications Tab.

You may view your work at any time by clicking the **View All My Evaluations** button.

REMINDER: Your reviews must be completed and entered into eGMS Reach by Friday, May 1, 2020, 11:59 pm Eastern Time.

8. *Manage your copies.*
Keep your applications and copies of your review sheets until **August 31, 2020,** in case there are questions from IMLS staff. Continue to maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review by keeping electronic and paper copies in a secure place. After August 31, 2020, destroy the applications and all review sheets, notes, and note templates.

APPENDIX A: APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

The mission of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is to advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. The success of IMLS grant programs depends upon the quality of its peer review process, through which hundreds of reviewers consider thousands of eligible applications fairly, candidly, and impartially in order to make recommendations for funding each year. Below is a summary of the process from application submission through award announcements.

1. Organizations submit their applications electronically using Grants.gov, the central portal of the United States government for receipt of electronic applications.

2. IMLS receives the applications, and staff members check them for organizational eligibility and application completeness.

3. IMLS staff members identify a pool of available peer reviewers with appropriate expertise. Peer review takes place in one or two tiers, depending on the grant program: field review, panel review, or both. Each complete application submitted by an eligible organization typically receives between three and six reviews.

4. For the applications ranked most highly by peer reviewers, IMLS staff members carefully assess the budgets and past organizational performance.

5. IMLS staff members provide a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director.

6. The IMLS Director makes all final funding decisions.

7. IMLS notifies all applicants whether or not they have received an award. With their notifications, all applicants receive anonymous copies of the field and/or panel reviews. IMLS also sends notification of the awards to each participating reviewer.

APPENDIX B: PROTECTING SENSITIVE DATA AT IMLS

IMLS is committed to protecting your private, sensitive information and employs the following physical and technical safeguards when collecting museum program reviewer and panelist information:

1. **Email Security.** IMLS email is hosted on a cloud computing infrastructure which has been reviewed and approved as meeting the security requirements of the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP). FedRAMP is a government-wide standardized program for security assessment, authorization, and monitoring of cloud products and services. FedRAMP requirements are based on (and surpass) the Security and Privacy Controls for Federal Information Systems and Organizations developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. FedRAMP's additional security controls address the unique elements of cloud computing to ensure all federal data is secure in cloud environments.

2. **Secure File Transmission.** IMLS Secure File Upload uses Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS), a transmission protocol that verifies the identity of a website or web service for a connecting client, and encrypts nearly all information sent between the website or service and the user. HTTPS is designed to prevent this information from being read or changed while in transit. HTTPS is a combination of HTTP and Transport Layer Security (TLS). TLS is a network protocol that establishes an encrypted connection to an authenticated peer over an untrusted network.

3. **Secure File Storage.** IMLS will only store secure files and any related passwords as long as necessary to complete the relevant transaction or process. A physical copy of personally identifiable information (PII) may be printed at IMLS for business use, after which the copy is secured in a locked location and destroyed after the business use ceases.

4. **Access Controls.** IMLS employs access controls to restrict access to sensitive information that is stored electronically. Access to IMLS files is restricted to authorized IMLS staff, and sensitive data is stored in folders that can only be accessed by a restricted set of authorized users. Files containing sensitive information are password-protected, providing an additional layer of security.

5. **Records Policies.** IMLS financial transaction records are subject to the agency's record retention policy and disposed of in accordance with the General Services Administration's General Records Schedule.

APPENDIX C: COMPLYING WITH ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS AND AVOIDING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As a reviewer for IMLS, you perform a vital role in ensuring the integrity of the IMLS's peer review process and must carry out your duties in accordance with government ethics rules. Before you evaluate applications, we ask that you review the following *General Principles of Ethical Conduct* and *Summary of the Conflict of Interest Laws*. You will be asked to certify compliance with the IMLS Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement and Certification. IMLS allocates up to one hour of your reviewer time for you to consider these materials.

If, at any time in the course of performing your duties at IMLS, you believe you may have a conflict of interest, please contact the IMLS program officer coordinating your review process. Other questions about the ethics rules and responsibilities may be directed to IMLS's Designated Agency Ethics Official at ethics@imls.gov; (202) 653-4787; 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000, Washington, DC 20024-2135.

General Principles of Ethical Conduct

1. Public service is a public trust, requiring you to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
2. You shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
3. You shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. You shall not, except pursuant to such reasonable exceptions as are provided by regulation, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by IMLS, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the your duties.
5. You shall put forth honest effort in the performance of your duties.
6. You shall make no unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Government.
7. You shall not use public office for private gain.
8. You shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
9. You shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.
10. You shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.
11. You shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
12. You shall satisfy in good faith your obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those – such as Federal, State, or local taxes – that are imposed by law.
13. You shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.
14. You shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that you are violating the law or the ethical standards.

Summary of Conflict of Interest Laws

18 U.S.C. § 201 – Prohibits you from acceptance of bribes or gratuities to influence Government actions.

18 U.S.C. § 203 – Prohibits you from accepting compensation for representational activities involving certain matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

18 U.S.C. § 205 – Prohibits you from certain involvement in claims against the United States or representing another before the Government in matters in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest.

18 U.S.C. § 207 – Imposes certain restrictions on you related to your activities after Government service.

18 U.S.C. § 208 – Prohibits you from participating in certain Government matters affecting your own financial interests or the interests of your spouse, minor child, general partner, or organization in which you are serving as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee.

18 U.S.C. § 209 – Prohibits you from being paid by someone other than the United States for doing their official Government duties.

Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), you may receive a grant application for review that could present a conflict of interest. Such a conflict could arise if you are involved with the applicant institution, or in the project described in the application, as a paid consultant or through other financial involvement. The same restrictions apply if your spouse or minor child is involved with the applicant institution or if the application is presented on behalf of an institution with which you, your spouse or minor child is negotiating for future employment.

A present financial interest is not the only basis for conflict of interest. Through prior association as an employee or officer, you may have gained knowledge of the applicant that would preclude objective review of its application. Past employment (generally more than five years) does not by itself disqualify a reviewer so long as the circumstances of your association permit you to perform an objective review of the application. If you believe you may have a conflict of interest with any application assigned to you for review, please notify us immediately.

You may still serve as a reviewer even if your institution is an applicant in this grant cycle or you were involved in an application submitted in this grant cycle, as long as you do not review any application submitted by your own institution or any application in which you were involved.

However, if you believe that these or any other existing circumstances may compromise your objectivity as a reviewer, please notify us immediately.

If an application presents no conflict of interest at the time you review it, a conflict of interest may still develop later on. Once you have reviewed an application, you should never represent the applicant in dealings with IMLS or another Federal agency concerning the application, or any grant that may result from it.

It is not appropriate, for your purposes or for the purposes of the institutions or organizations you represent, for you to make specific use of confidential information derived from individual

applications that you read while you were serving as an IMLS reviewer. In addition, pending applications are confidential. Accordingly, you must obtain approval from IMLS before sharing any proposal information with anyone, whether for the purpose of obtaining expert advice on technical aspects of an application or for any reason.

If you have any questions regarding conflict of interest, either in relation to a specific application or in general, please contact the IMLS program officer who is coordinating the review process.

Certification

I acknowledge that I have reviewed the ethics training materials and the Conflict of Interest Statement above. To the best of my knowledge, I have no conflict of interest that would preclude my service to the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Name (Printed)	Signature	Date

> Note: Once you have reviewed this document, return to eGMS
> Reach to affirm that you have approved its contents.

APPENDIX D: PANEL REVIEW CRITERIA FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP GRANTS FOR MUSEUMS

Does the project meet the goals of NLG-Museums and the project category under which it was submitted?

The distinguishing features of NLG-Museums projects are broad impact, innovation, and collaboration. Exemplary projects:
- address a current need of the museum field
- advance practice in the museum profession
- demonstrate the potential for far-reaching impact
- strengthen museum services to benefit the audiences and communities being served
- reflect awareness and support of current strategic initiatives and agendas in the field
- align with the goals of the project category under which it was submitted:
  - Collections Care and Public Access
  - Data, Analysis, and Assessment
  - Digital Platforms and Applications
  - Diversity and Inclusion
  - Professional Development
- align with the goals of the funding category: non-research, research, rapid prototyping

Is the project poised for successful implementation?

- How do they demonstrates thorough understanding of relevant issues and current practices?
- How do they addresses an assessed need?
- How do they allocate resources for the successful completion of the project?
- How do they connect goals and objectives to appropriate activities and intended outcomes?

If funded, will the project achieve its intended results?

- How will they track, measure, and change course (if needed) in order to achieve desired outcomes?
- How will they generate continuing benefits for the museum field?

APPENDIX E: GUIDANCE FOR RESEARCH APPLICATIONS

An effective research application should answer the following questions in the project narrative.

What are the specific research questions your project will attempt to answer?

List the question or questions that will drive your proposed activities. Research questions should be clear and concise to help reviewers understand what you wish to learn.

What is your theoretical framing?

What are the concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and/or theories that support and inform your research and guide your approach to data collection and analysis? If you are proposing to conduct research that will build theory, explain why.

What is the relevance of your proposed research for current practice?

Discuss how your proposed work builds on existing projects or efforts, including those funded by IMLS. Provide information about how your research can lead to improved museum or library practice and demonstrate you are familiar with current scholarship, including empirical work, in your area of interest.

What research methods will you use to conduct the research?

Detail the methods you will use to collect and analyze data. Say why they are the most appropriate for addressing the question(s) at hand. Your methods must be replicable and based on current practices.

What type of data will you gather?

Describe the type of data you will collect and any measures you will take to ensure its validity and reliability. Detail the methods for collecting information along with any potential privacy or human subjects concerns that may arise. List potential challenges in gathering data and explain how you will address them. As noted above, research and information collection is subject to applicable law, including but not limited to privacy requirements and 45 C.F.R. pt. 46 (Protection of Human Subjects), see also the IMLS Assurances and Certifications.

How will you analyze and use the data?

Describe how you will analyze the results of your research and relate them to your research questions. If applicable, outline an analysis plan that links a set of testable hypotheses to the proposed research question(s). Identify the variables of interest that are key to the investigation, and explain how you will deal with alternative explanations for the observed phenomena.

How will you report the information?

Address how you will communicate the results to a variety of target audiences with different levels of expertise, especially practitioners.

How will you manage the research data and make it available for future use (as applicable)?

Explain how you will manage, share, preserve, and document the information and research products you will create during the project. Data sharing is an essential component of research and expedites the translation of research results into new knowledge and practices. If your project involves the collection and analysis of data, we expect you to include, as part of your application, a data management plan (Part IV of the Digital Product Form (PDF, 2MB; Word, 40.4KB)) that provides for long-term preservation and access.